

## Age of acquiring adult plumage in *Gypaetus barbatus*

by Jeffery Boswall

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With bird species that take several years to acquire adult plumage it is often difficult to know just how long the transition does take. It may therefore be of interest to record that a fully grown nestling Lammergeyer *Gypaetus barbatus*, just ready to fly, brought to Madame D. Sokoloff in Addis Ababa in 1963, about the month of April and kept by her in captivity, had acquired fully adult plumage between  $5\frac{1}{2}$  and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  years later. I saw the bird in April 1969 and again in April 1970.

It is also of interest to record that the bird's under-parts were off-white in colour, showing no sign whatever of the saffron colouring found in wild individuals. This is consistent with the "rusty" shade being acquired cosmetically as "adherent coloration". See Berthold (*Bull. Br. Orn. Cl.*, 1967: 89-90), and correspondence in *Bokmakierie*, finalised in 21(1), 1969: 24-25.

## Animated perches and feeding associations of birds in the Sudan

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This note records the use of animated perches by birds and describes what may be termed bird feeding associations or hunting parties. Observations were made in the Sudan during the months of September to December each year, from 1960 to 1966. In the Blue Nile District around Sennar suitable land is devoted to irrigated cotton and sorghum, several thousands of acres of which are surrounded by vast areas of grass covered flat land between the White and Blue Niles and the River Dinder. The whole area is sparsely treed, trees and bush being, more or less, limited to the river edges. The rains commence in July and continue intermittently until mid-October or early November, and these produce a dense and rapid flush of various species of grass, particularly *Sorghum* spp. which grow between five and ten feet high. The grasslands produce and shelter a wealth of insects especially large and small Orthoptera of many species and great numbers of Lepidoptera and other small insects, thus there is abundant food. However such tall grass is an unfavourable environment for many insectivorous birds like those that take a great deal of their prey on the wing. Inanimate objects that provide a "look-out" stance and which disturb the grass and so flushing insects are most acceptable and advantage is taken of them.

The Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus* Gmelin is one of the commonest species and is present in great numbers in September and October, just before the European migrants arrive. They make great use of the animated perch and I have records or photographs of the birds on camels, cattle, donkeys, sheep and goats, and once upon a dog. Grimwood (1964) has recorded his observations on this habit from the Lake Rudolf area of Kenya and quoting Praed and Grant (1962) adds the remark "I am convinced that this behaviour was not for lack of perches . . . but because they are developing Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (Linnaeus) habits". In the Sudan the use of animated perches is essential in most of the area as there are no natural resting places with a view, but the animated perch is clearly used, both as a resting